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Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY VIENNA PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 236114

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PINR, IS
SUBJECT: NEW ISRAELI AMBASSADOR TO AUSTRIA
REF: VIENNA 9093

1. AVIGDOR DAGAN, VETERAN DIPLOMAT OF OVER 20 YEARS, WAS RECENTLY NAMED AMBASSADOR TO AUSTRIA. SINCE 1972 HE HAD BEEN SERVING FOR SECOND TIME AS DIRECTOR OF EASTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND IS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN ISRAELI RELATIONS WITH EASTERN EUROPE AND SOVIET UNION.

2. DAGAN WAS BORN VICTOR FISCHEL IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA ON 30 JUNE 1912. (HE CHANGED HIS NAME AFTER HIS ARRIVAL IN ISRAEL.) HE STUDIED AT PRAGUE UNIVERSITY AND HAS A PH.D. IN LAW AND POLITICAL SCIENCE. ACTIVE IN JEWISH AFFAIRS, HE SERVED AS SECRETARY OF JEWISH PARTY IN CZECH PARLIAMENT FROM 1935 TO 1939. HE SPENT WORLD WAR II YEARS IN ENGLAND, WHERE HE HAS SAID HE WAS PERSONAL SECRETARY TO JAN MASARYK WHILE THE LATTER WAS FOREIGN MINISTER-IN-EXILE. FROM 1945 UNTIL HIS 1949 IMMIGRATION TO ISRAEL, DAGAN WAS A MEMBER OF CZECH FOREIGN SERVICE.

3. UPON HIS ARRIVAL IN ISRAEL DAGAN JOINED ISRAELI
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FOREIGN MINISTRY; AMONG HIS EARLY POSTS WERE TOKYO, RANGOON

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AND WARSAW. HE WAS PLACED IN CHARGE OF POLITICAL-ECONOMIC PLANNING DIVISION OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IN 1962. FROM

NOVEMBER 1965 UNTIL ARAB-ISRAELI WAR IN JUNE 1967 DAGAN WAS CHIEF OF MISSION OF ISRAEL'S LEGATION IN BELGRADE. HE THEN BECAME DIRECTOR OF EASTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS FOR HIS FIRST OF TWO STINTS IN THAT CAPACITY. FROM OCTOBER 1969 UNTIL EARLY 1972 HE SERVED CONCURRENTLY AS AMBASSADOR TO NORWAY AND NONRESIDENT AMBASSADOR T O ICELAND.

4. INTELLIGENT, AMBITIOUS, SOMEWHAT CONCEITED AND OFTEN CURT, AMBASSADOR DAGAN CAN BE WARM AND COURTEOUS TO PEOPLE HE ADMIRES. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF SEVERAL BOOKS OF POETRY AND A NOVEL AS WELL AS ONE OF THE FEW COMPREHENSIVE STUDIES ON HISTORY OF ISRAELI-SOVIET RELATIONS, PUBLISHED 1968 OR 1969. HE LIKES GOOD RESTAURANTS AND GOOD WINES. HE AND HIS WIFE, THE FORMER STELLA BERGER, HAVE TWO GROWN SONS. DAGAN SPEAKS IMPECCABLE ENGLISH AND PROBABLY SEVERAL OTHER FOREIGN LANGUAGES.

5. COMMENT. ISRAELIS HAVE TOLD US THAT DAGAN'S SELECTION FOR VIENNA POST WAS CAREFULLY PLANNED ONE AS WATCHING BRIEF TOWARD EE COUNTRIES AND USSR. WE SUSPECT THAT DAGAN, WHO HAS GOOD JUDGMENT AND IS WELL THOUGHT OF IN ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTRY, MIGHT EVENTUALLY PLAY ROLE IN ANY DISCUSSIONS ON POSSIBLE RESTORATION OF ISRAELI RELATIONS WITH SUCH COUNTRIES. DAGAN WAS OPEN AND FRANK WITH OUR TEL AVIV EMBASSY IN 1972-1974 ON VARIOUS FEELERS ISRAEL WAS RECEIVING IN THAT PERIOD FROM EE GOVERNMENTS AND USSR. WE WOULD EXPECT HIM TO WANT TO BUILD GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH EMBASSY VIENNA. INGERSOLL

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